

The UK does not have to pay a single Euro to exit the EU – and is making a very generous and friendly Brexit offer to the EU

I am glad the Lords have confirmed what I have long argued that the UK has no legal obligations under the EU Treaties to pay any one off exit payment or any continuing contributions after departure.

They missed out the even more important point – UK Ministers have no legal power to make any one off or continuing payments after leaving. The payments would not be authorised. The legal base of the Treaty supports our regular contributions but not the payments the EU have in mind.

The EU may well think it a good idea to ease the problems they have on our departure by charging us a huge sum for daring to leave. The answer is a simple and polite No to that request.

The EU needs to concentrate on making sure it still has tariff free access to our market, which they also need. The good news is we are happy to offer them that. The bad news is they do not seem to be able to agree anything amongst themselves about how to respond to Brexit. The EU Commission also seems to think it should try and threaten and bully us, when the sensible approach is to be helpful and courteous, as we are towards them.

The UK is offering them tariff free trade and the full rights of EU citizens to stay and work in our country. That's a great and generous offer. Why can't they simply do the same civilised thing? Why don't they take seriously their legal obligations under their own Treaty to have good relations with a neighbouring state with a flourishing trade?

Environmental court opens in NW China province

A special court for environmental cases has been established in northwest China's Qinghai Province to provide legal service for environmental protection work in the Sanjiangyuan area.

The Sanjiangyuan environmental court, affiliated with the Yushu City People's Court, was approved by the Higher People's Court in Qinghai Province and was established on Tuesday, according to the government of the Tibetan prefecture

of Yushu.

The court hired six people to handle environmental protection cases and civil suits related to pollution prevention and environmental damage in the area.

Sanjiangyuan literally means “the source of three rivers,” referring to the Yangtze, Yellow, and Lancang (Mekong) rivers. The ecology in the area has degraded due to human activities such as overgrazing.

The environmental court is the first such specialized judiciary organ in the province, said Man Zhifang, vice president of the Higher People’s Court in Qinghai Province.

Planning began on a national park in the area last year, aiming to protect the headwaters of the three rivers. It is expected to officially open in 2020. Endi

Foreign gov’ts should not interfere in internal affairs: HKSAR gov’t

A spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government said on Saturday that foreign governments should not interfere in the internal affairs of the Hong Kong SAR.

In response to the U.S. Department of State’s human rights report relating to the Hong Kong SAR, the spokesman said, since the return to the motherland, Hong Kong has been exercising a high degree of autonomy and “Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong” in strict accordance with the Basic Law.

This demonstrates the full and successful implementation of the “one country, two systems” principle, which has been widely recognized by the international community.

“Under Article 158 of the Basic Law, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPCSC) has the power to interpret the Basic Law. The NPCSC’s power of interpretation of the Basic Law is part of the constitutional order of the Hong Kong SAR, and is recognized by Hong Kong courts,” the spokesman said.

“There are ongoing judiciary proceedings regarding ‘confirmation form’ and ‘invalid nominations’ in relation to the 2016 Legislative Council election, as well as ‘oath-taking’ by certain Legislative Council Members. Foreign governments should respect the rule of law and the independent judicial system in Hong Kong. They should not interfere in the internal affairs of the HKSAR,” the spokesman added. Endit

Some smart phones are neither smart nor good phones

I have usually been an early and enthusiastic adopter of new technology. I liked the arrival of the mobile phone, thought the internet amazing and welcomed the sat nav. I automated business processes where this could take drudge work out and improve the quality of the product and the quality of work people were asked to do.

I don't have the same enthusiasm for my so called smart phone. I'm not talking about a particular model or make. The faults of mine are likely to be faults of others.

My main need from a mobile phone is to be able to make and receive phone calls when on the move. I have good internet connections at home and in the office, with a large screen computer, good keyboard for typing, and landline phones that work. I have no wish to use a small screen mobile with variable reception in these circumstances. I need my phone travelling by car (hands free using when parked), walking or on public transport. I take an ipad for computing at my destination or on a train if travelling to a temporary location away from home and work.

The mobile phone has several disadvantages. Because it operates by means of a small screen if there is bright sunlight you cannot read it at all. Even not so bright daylight makes it difficult to read. Because you need to instruct it by touch it becomes finger printed, and often your touch is taken as a different instruction from the one you intended. Trying to type a message is difficult at speed because the letter pad is so small for any given letter. In addition, when the phone rings I need first to scroll the page, and then hit the receive bar on the second frame to appear. All this can take too long so the caller rings off. Quite often my touch does not register in time with the phone. It means a lot of lost calls when out and about. It does not have a long battery life, so on a busy day you have to remember to take a recharger with you and plug it in somewhere.

It is not that reliable on a train and of course cuts out on the tube. Bluetooth links to the car do not always work, unlike the old mobiles which you plugged into the car system by cable which always worked.

It is true it can receive messages, offer me a moving map, provides a modest quality camera and doubtless other things I have not asked it to do. What I can't accept is that is a smart phone. The truth is its a dumb phone, a not very good one. I just lose more calls with it. The old phones just required you to press one button to receive a call, and plugged into the car which also recharged them.

In Chad and Cameroon, Security Council hears of Boko Haram terror and survivors' needs

4 March 2017 – The United Nations Security Council is today in Chad, as part of a four-country visit to shine a spotlight on the ongoing humanitarian challenges in the Lake Chad Basin region and draw international attention to the plight of about 11 million people.

In the Chadian capital of N'Djamena, the Council met with Prime Minister Albert Pahimi Padacké and visited the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which includes troops from the four affected regional countries – Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, plus Benin – in the fight against Boko Haram.

The Security Council welcomed the efforts to fight Boko Haram and encouraged more regional cooperation, according to a Tweet by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the UN which has the Security Council's rotating presidency for the month of March and is leading the visit.

Discussions with the Prime Minister also focused on the economic situation in Chad and the importance of women participating in the economy and politics.

Also today, the Council members met with representatives of the UN agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations working in the country.

They are working to aid the millions of people who, in addition to the security threat from Boko Haram and the fight against the terror group, also face a major food and nutrition crises. Some 2.4 million people are currently displaced in the area, according to UN figures, and more than 7.1 million are severely hungry.

In his conversations with the Council, Stephen Tool, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator in Chad, detailed the severe challenges in the countries, which include malnutrition, disease and health, sanitation. He noted, however, that you cannot deal with humanitarian issues without looking at the root causes which include insecurity, development gaps, lack of education, poor agriculture, and so on.

'That's who we're fighting for'

The Security Council delegation, led by Ambassador Matthew Rycroft of the United Kingdom, had yesterday visited Cameroon, where members met with President Paul Biya and other senior Government officials.

The Council also met with refugees and people displaced by Boko Haram and the forces tracking them.

In a blog post, Mr. Rycroft detailed meeting two young survivors of Boko Haram's violence. The first, a boy who was 13 years old when the terrorist group stormed his village and killed his friends and family. The other boy was about 10 years when he was kidnapped, escaped, and has since 2014 lived in a camp for internally displaced persons.

"They are heroic beyond measures," Mr. Rycroft said. "That's who we're fighting for."

Speaking earlier in the day, Mr. Rycroft outlined his vision for the visit.

"First of all, we came here in order to shine a spotlight on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

"We came to hear the individual stories of people involved, whether they are refugees or displaced people or other victims of Boko Haram.

"We stand with the government and the people of Cameroon, and the wider region, in tackling the scourge of terrorism, and in encouraging them to look broadly and deeply at the root causes of the set of crises going on here."

The delegation heads to Niger later today, and is scheduled to continue on to Nigeria tomorrow.